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DISCOURSE
About the Charge of
NOVELTY

Upon the Reformed
Church of England,

Made by the
P A P I S T S

Asking of us the Question,
Where was our Religion before
L U T H E R?

Hasscard, Gregory

By Dr *Hasscard*.

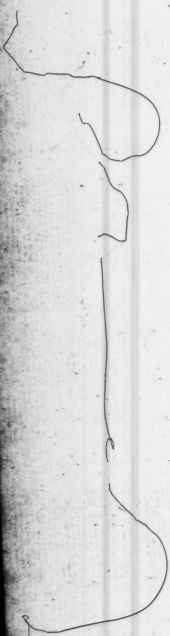
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A DISCOURSE

About the Charge of

NOVELTY

Upon the Reformed Church of
England made by the Papists, &c.

THe Christian Doctrine was once, by the way of trust delivered by Christ and his Apostles unto the Saints, Men of Care and Honesty, and who should preserve it in its first purity and Spiritual intention, only to prescribe methods unto Men by Faith, and an Honest Conversation, how they might arrive at Heaven; that this Religion might make a deeper impression upon their minds and memories and be more faithfully kept, it was set down in plain and *significant Terms, and reduced into short summaries called a Form of sound Words, that good thing, that Form of Doctrine, a depositum, or trust, and by the Church afterwards a Creed.* That it might be believed and valued, it was in its own Nature of the greatest importance, confirmed with variety of the best of Arguments,

2 Tim. I. 13.

14.

Rom. 6. 17.

1 Tim. 6. 20.

Gal. 1. 8. 9.
Rev. 22. 18.

miracles, Prophecies, innocent carriage, and Death of its numerous Disciples, and severe Curses denounc't against any that should add to or take from it, till their great Master, and its Author, Jesus should come from Heaven again. Yet notwithstanding all this, by the Malice and Subtilty of the Devil, the Designs and Passions of Men, the Ignorance and Negligence of some, the Cunning and Industry of others, this plain and simple Religion began by degrees to be corrupted by the mixtures of Philosophy and niceness, by the Rules of State Craft and Policy, by idle Traditions, & Inventions, by the Melancholy of some, and the gayety of others; and the natural Face of it was so strangely changed that it seem'd another Gospel, and you might seek Christianity in the Christian World and yet scarce find it. Many Kingdoms and People were to blame in this, being Treacherous to their Master, and false to their trust, suffering so Pure and Chast a Religion to be Corrupted or Stolen away, but the Church of Rome seems the most Guilty of them all, (especially upon her own grounds, her Bishop being the Infalible Vicar of Jesus, to whom are committed the Oracles of God) once indeed renowned for her Faith and Pious Governours, but now as famous for their Degeneracy as well in Religion as in their Lives. Whose Ambition or Interest prostituted the Faith to those Designs, and made it Earthly and Sensual, or their Negligence and Stupidity suffered the Enemy in the night of Ignorance to sow the tares, which so grew up and choakt the Wheat, that Faith was turn'd into Fables and Lyes, Foppery and Superstition were Nick-nam'd Devotion, Ridiculous Gestures and Habits past for Repentance and Mortification, the Bible was shut up and contemned, and the Legends open'd and praised, Honest and Good Men were butchered, and unknown Persons and Malefactors Canonized.

Cyp. Epist.
Ox. Edit. p.
5, 6. Rom. 18.
Platina vita
Bon. 7. p 159.
vide quaso
quantum de-
generaverint,
&c

Canonized, Saints with their Pictures and Reliques were made Rivals to Christ in Mediation and Intercession, Gods Works were spoiled by Merit and Arrogance, or done by way of composition for vices, the fear of Hell was abated by the invention of Purgatory, Christ was fetch from Glory by the Magick of a Priest and put into a Wafer, or into a more sordid place, riddles and quirks of their Schools were made Articles of Faith; in short, old truths were rooted up, or new errors grafted on them, Power and Profit were Stiled the Church; the Court of *Rome* was brought into the Temple and called the Holy of Holies. Such errors as these in the Christian Faith came from *Rome*, and infected our Ancient British Church (not at first planted by the Labours of the *Romish* Bishops of old, but Corrupted by their later Emissaries) and lasted a long time among us, being supported by Power, twisted with Interest, sutable to the pleasures and vices of Men, incorporated into the Government having put out Mens reason to try and discern between Truth and Error, and at length became Fashionable, Legal, Terrible with Fires and Censures which made us Sick unto Death, absolute almost and beyond recovery. Such was our condition here of Slavery and Ignorance, but it pleased him that dwells between the Golden Candlesticks, to dispel our Darkness and restore the Ancient light of Primitive Christianity. His Wisdom and Goodness improving the passions and inclinations of some in temporal changes and concerns to Spiritual purposes, encouraging the secret groans and desires of others, putting many more upon search and enquiry after Truth, and infusing courage for it, at length came to a resolution of Arguing and Debating the Errors of the *Romish* Faith and manners, of reforming the abuses in Discipline and Devotion and to call back True Christianity again, and being

being dispossess of the Spirit of *Rome* which oft tore them and rent them till they foamed again, are now cloth'd and in their Wits once more; upon this account the Friends of *Rome* call us Hereticks, Schismatics and Innovators, Discharge Censures and Excommunications and Eternal Damnation against us, are full of Wrath and indignation, and to shew a little Wit in their Anger, *And pretended reason, perty ask the Question, where was our Religion before Luther?*

Bellarmin. Campanian. Smith.

This is the common and trite objection against our Religion, very frequent not only in the Mouths of their more Ordinary Disciples, but also of their more Learned Writers, who (whatever strength they really fancy may be in the Argument it self) think it a very proper Weapon to attempt the Vulgar and the Weak withal, to amuse and dazle the less discerning eye, at least when backt and set off with the stately Names of Infallibility, Succession, Antiquity, and the like; and they tell us roundly our Faith was but yesterday, our Religion is new and upstart, as only *Henry* the Eighth and *Cromwells* contrivance (they may truly say as much as their Treason was *Cecil's* Plot.) That our Faith began only in the year 1517. in *Saxony* by one *Martin Luther* an Apostate Fryar, who for the sake of a fair Nun and other designs renounc't the Ancient Faith, and set up his new Device of Protestantism at *Spires*; which did not quietly last much above seven years, for in the year 1525. starts up *Zuinglius*, & after two years more the Anabaptists, who change and correct *Luther's* Religion, and draw great numbers of his Disciples from him; and himself for his reward dyed a strange Death, great Noises and Crackings were heard in his Tomb, which being opened, neither Body nor Bones were found, and the smell of Brimstone was ready to stifle the standers by. And therefore they say, we ought to look from

Bellar. Tom. lib. 4. p. 287.

from whence we are faln, to repent of our Hereſie, and return to our firſt Love, and not ſtick ſo cloſe to our Religion, the new invention of ſo ill a Man. That we may therefore keep thoſe firm that are members of our Religion, and bring thoſe back that have revolted from us into the *Romiſh* Communion, we have endeavour'd to give a ſatisfactory Answer to this their Queſtion, Where was your Religion before the times of *Luther*? Not to trouble our ſelves with ſuch Legends as theſe, and Uncharitableneſs along with them, the Answer is thus.

1. Telling them plainly where our Religion was before *Luthers* time.

2. By ſhewing what Errors and Miſtakes are included in the Queſtion.

3. To turn the Queſtion upon themſelves, and ask them ſome others of the like nature.

1. The plain Answer to the Queſtion is this: That our Religion was long before the times of *Luther*, and believed and ſetled in many Kingdoms and Nations of the World, and hath neither Novelty nor Singularity in it. 'Tis an old Religion, I am ſure 'tis of Age and can ſpeak for it ſelf. It hath laſted now theſe 1600 years and more, founded at firſt by Chriſt & his Apoſtles, handed down to us through many Sufferings and Perſecutions, and here it is preſerved. It contracted indeed in the coming down a great deal of ruſt by the Falſeneſs and Careleſneſs of its keepers, particularly by the Church of *Rome*, we ſcower'd off the ruſt, and kept the mettall; that's the *Romiſh* Religion, this is the *Engliſh*. They added Faſe Doctrines to the Chriſtian Faith, we leſt the one and kept to the other; this is Ancient, thoſe are New. Our Religion is the ſame with that of the Early Chriſtians, Martyrs, and Confefſors, believed

Acts 11. 26.

in the first 300 years, and defended by all Councils truly General; Our Religion in those first Ages was in *Palestine* and *Greece*, in *Egypt*, in *Antioch* where the Disciples were first called Christians and in *Rome* it self, and wherever the great labours of her first Apostles carry'd her to the different and remote Countries of the World: Then and there our Religion liv'd, where *Peter*, *Linus*, and *Cletus*, and all the first and Pious Bishops of *Rome* did. It suffered indeed great variety of changes and conditions, by the interest and wickedness of men, sometimes more Adulterated, and sometimes more Pure, it flitted from Country to Country, sometimes greater and sometimes smaller in its number, sometimes in a dejected, and sometimes in a more flourishing state, but somewhere or other it was intire and without mixture, as it was at first given unto the world, and such an old Religion as this we are of, holding fast neither more nor less, neither adding to nor diminishing what Christ and his Apostles taught; and if Antiquity must evidence the Truth of our Religion, we are safe and secure that we have right on our side. And this will appear if we consider these following things.

I. What Conformity our Religion carries to that of Christ and his Apostles. Let any impartial eye compare them both together, and he will find the features and complexion, the whole body of Religion the same in both. Whatever they delivered out at first, as Fundamental to Salvation, whatever they Instituted as parts of Devotion, Discipline, and Order, we faithfully retain in our Church, and if any Truth of moment hitherto by Fraud or Negligence be concealed from her, she is ready to receive it, whenever it is made plain, not having stopt up the way of Truth by a pretence of Infallibility or want of Modesty to confess an error. She hath the same sense of the Nature,

ture, Offices, the Design and whole Undertakings of Christ, that the truly Ancient Church had; She receives the Creed and Bible, and any Traditions that can be made out to be truly Divine, in the same meaning and understanding that Christ and his Apostles gave to the first Christians, and they to us. What their thoughts of Saints and holy Souls departed were, ours are, thoughts of respect, remembrance and imitation, not divine Worship. Christ instituted proper Figures, and Symbols of Bread and Wine, to represent and confirm, to convey and commemorate his bloody Passion and Benefits to Mankind; in this sense She preserves the Institution sacred, and doth not really Sacrifice or Crucify the Lord of Life again. Christ commanded good works under the penalty of eternal Damnation, She doth the same, and in our Masters language bids the doers of them call themselves unprofitable Servants, beating down Pride and Merit. Christ and his Apostles told the World what departing Souls must expect; Her sense is the same, that there are no second Ventures and Trials to be made, neither can a kind Friend with a good Estate, left for Masses or Monks, compound for a Life ill spent. Run through the whole Constitution of our Church in Articles of Faith, and Rules of Manners, you may trace them to Christ and his Apostles time, and all other parts of her Government and Order are truly Primitive. And it must needs be so, if She sincerely follows her rule of Faith, the holy Scriptures, so Ancient, so Divine, and whatever is declared there essential to Salvation She brings into her Creed, and resolves to keep it, like a mighty Treasure, faithfully unto death. And indeed the Church of *Rome* confesses, that what we do retain is ancient and Apostolical; but pretends that we are defective in many things, and want some necessaries which they have, to make an entire Faith. But we challenge them

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to prove that those opinions wherein we differ from them were delivered by Christ or any men Divinely inspired in those times. And they seem to acknowledge we do not, and therefore to make up the matter, pretend a Divine Authority in the Church, to cast new Articles, and Truths *ferè de fide*, almost fit for a Creed, and some others of them confess that some of their Opinions as Image-Worship and others were not maintain'd in the first Ages of Christianity for fear of coming too near the Heathens Worship and out of other Prudential considerations, so that whosoever doth compare the Doctrine of our Church, with that of Christ and his Apostles, must needs conclude that our Religion is Ancient Christianity, and that the charge of Novelty is groundless.

2. The Nature of Reformation, which was not to found a New Church but correct an old one. Christianity that Pearl of great price, was hid with trash and filth, that the Romish Church had heapt upon it, our Reformers remov'd only what loaded and obscur'd it, and restor'd it to its first Beauty and Lustre. Such a Reformation indeed is later then their errors, and it must needs be so, it naturally supposing them before, otherwise 'tis not Reformation but a destructive change; but Primitive Christianity which is our Religion was long before the Disease of Popery, though the cure of this Disease was after, or later then the disease it self, but the sound Body of Christianity for which we are concern'd, was before them both, for 'tis not Reformation barely that we are pleased withal, no more then with a Pill or Potion, but only as necessary to drive away an inveterate Disease, and recover an old Religion to its former Health. When Christ reformed the Jewish Religion from the false senses and glosses that the Scribes and Pharisees had put upon it, and grafted Christianity upon the old stock, will the Romanists

Mat. 13. 4, 6.

nists call this a New Religion or rather an old one well amended and improved by Divine Authority. *Bellarmin* doth allow this for Truth, and saith that Christianity was rather a new State and Condition than a new Church, and he that can call our Religion New, because 'tis mended, and made now, what it was about 1600 years ago, may affirm that Christ built a new Temple when he Whipt the buyers and sellers out of the old. And that *Hezekiah* built a New Sanctuary, and Instituted a New Passover, because he cleans'd the one and restor'd the other to its first Institution; our Reformation did no more, it only scal'd off the Leprosie that stuck to the Body of the *Romish* Church, it only par'd off those Additions that Interest or Superstition, Niceness or Foppery, had glew'd to it; what after remain'd, was our Religion, the same that Christ and his Apostles taught the world at first. And if they can shew that any thing hath been added since, pernicious to the Nature of the True and Old Religion, our Church is ready to remove it, or that any thing is wanting that is necessary to its complement and perfection, she is ready to entertain it with the same spirit of meekness and Wisdom, and Regard to the Gospel, that she used in the Reformation; but hitherto upon good grounds and strict inquiry She is fully satisfied that Her Religion is absolute and compleat Christianity.

3. We have many and impartial Judges on our side, that our Religion is Pure and Old Christianity. The particular Church of *Rome* indeed, that supports her self by a pretended Infallibility, to be true to her Principle, refuses to be tryed by any other Church but will be only Judge of her self, and others too; yet we that are certain and sure of the Truth of our Religion, though not Infallible, dare Appeal to the Judgment of other Christian Churches. The *Greek* Church condemns their

²Chron. 30. 5.

Bayon. Tom.
10. p. 256.

half Communion, the Doctrines of Purgatory, Merit and Supererogation. The Adoration of Images, their locking up the Scriptures in an unknown Tongue, their extream Unction, and sale of Masses, and laughs at their Infallibility, the thing that makes their errors in Faith incorrigible; the *Armenian* Christians reject the Supremacy of the Pope, Transubstantiation, Purgatory, and excommunicate those that worship Images. The *Jacobites*, the *Indians* of St. Thomas, the *Egyptian* and *Abassine* Christians, dissent from most or all of the *Romish* errors which we condemn. We have all the truly-ancient Christian Churches on our side, and most of the Modern whom the busy Emissaries of Rome have not terrified or seduc'd into their Party: Our Writers have appealed with great success to the Ancient Councils, the holy Fathers, and to the Learned and Pious Bishops and Priests of old, and from thence discovered the Novelty of the *Romish* Faith, and the good old way of the *English* Church. And they dare not stand the trial, when we desire to be determined by the best and infallible Judge, the holy Scriptures, except they must give the meaning of them, otherwise they load them with *Ignominious Names*, of a *Lesbian* rule, mere *Ink and Paper*, and a *Nose of Wax*. Who will they be try'd by? by a Council truly General? No, except it be called, manag'd, and confirm'd by the Pope. Will they be judg'd by any that differ from them, yet are men of good, honest, and unprejudic'd Judgements? No, they are out of the pale of the Church, and stubborn Hereticks. And the best reason they have for their assurance that they are in the right is, that they are sure they are so, and keep themselves safe in their Enchanted Castle of Infallibility. The *Arabian* Philosopher was offended at, and abhorr'd their barbarous Doctrine of Transubstantiation, and eating of their God, and resolv'd

solv'd to stick to his Philosophical rather than be of such a Christian Religion. The *Roman* Images, and the Worship of them, have laid a Stumbling block before the *Jews*, who therefore approved our Sentence and condemnation of them; having therefore such a number of good Testimonies and Judgements on our side, we rise up and reverence the grey Hairs of our Religion, which *Rome* once cloth'd in a wanton and phantastick dress, and made it ridiculous; which because we have pull'd off, and put on its ancient habit, and made it look manly with the Image of God and Christ upon it, they call us Innovators. Many of their own Writers have spoke in favour of the *English* Church, and many of their distinctions in a fair sence have concluded for her Doctrine, and shewn their dislike of many opinions of their own Church.

4. That our Religion was long before *Luther* will appear from the oppositions that were made to the Papal corruptions, which did not enjoy so quiet a life, but were frequently disturb'd, and cry'd out against, not onely by other Churches, but by many honest and considering men in their own Communion. Men they were, not of Interest and Discontent, Peevishness, and given to change, of little Learning and less conscience, and note in the world, but men eminent in their Generation, men of Probity and Studies, of Temper and consideration; men that stood not alone, but had great numbers of Disciples, a visible Society of Christians, who followed their Judgements. Some of these sadly bewailed the degenerate state of the *Roman* Church; others petitioned for, and advised not onely the correction of the abuses of good Doctrines and innocent Institutions, but the Reformation of gross Errours and scandalous Additions to the Christian Faith, and others in
great

great Authority promised an amendment, and to reduce the whole frame of Christianity to its Primitive sense and Model. And the famous Council of *Trent* was promist and begun to rectifie Errors and Abuses crept into the *Romish* Faith and Government, yet after a long Sitting it fatally concluded, confirming those corruptions which was hop'd after so many complaints and addresses with strong reasons for them, should have been throughly redrest and reform'd. The Original of their barbarous Inquisition will be a standing record of the frequent and stout oppositions that were made against the *Romish* Innovation in the Christian Faith. And so long as the Blood of the numerous *Albigenses* and *Waldenses* crys to Heaven for Vengeance against the Papal cruelty, we have a cloud of Witnesses for this Truth, who resisted unto Death the new Doctrines of *Rome*. The carriage of old *Wicliff* and his Followers, tells us plainly in story, that the corruptions of *Rome* had no such quiet possession, but ever and anon some or other in considerable numbers did endeavour to eject them out of their hold, though they paid dear for it. And so long as the Treachery of their Council of *Constance* about the safe conduct granted to poor *Huss*, and his Disciples in number above forty thousand, remains upon record never to be forgotten or forgiven, so long we have clear evidences of strong resistance made to the *Romish* Religion before the times of *Luther*. And in most Countries and times, where and when the *Romish* corruptions began from small and obscure beginnings to be gross and plain, some or other in greater or lesser numbers began to Renounce and Protest against them. What though some of these early Reformers might hold some erroneous Opinions which we our selves condemn, yet however they opposed the *Romish* Church in her corruptions and these tended to a Reformation, which was

was compleated onely by degrees, and 'tis no wonder some Stumbled in such a night of Ignorance. And have not the Agents of *Rome* destroy'd the Papers and Records, disguiz'd their Adversaries, and falsify'd their Opinions to serve the Power and Interest of their great Mistriß? They therefore branded the *Waldenses* with the name of Manichæism and that they affirm'd two Principles or Originals of all things, because they asserted that the Emperour was Independent of the Pope, and that they deny'd Christ to be the Son of God, because they could not believe a crust of Bread to be Christ. And they have fram'd as lewd stories against many excellent Men of the later Ages who withstood the approaches of their Doctrine and Government, which we certainly know, and the more Ingenuous among them confess, to be notoriously false. Though we have reason to believe (because of the severity and industry of the *Romish* Factors ever warm against those who oppos'd her Practises) a great number of Honest and Learned Men (as those Ages would afford) are buried in obscurity and their names unknown, there being an Expurgatorian Index for the merits of such Men as well as Books and Editions, yet we have a sufficient Catalogue of them who kept up the Title and claim of old Christianity and would not suffer their new Errors to plead prescription.

2. By shewing what Errours and Mistakes are included in the Question.

1. That these new Errors of *Rome* are absolutely necessary to the being of a Christian Church: For though we believe all that Christ and his Apostles taught, all things that are contain'd in the Holy Scriptures, all things that undoubted Tradition, or good Reason proves to derive themselves from both or either, yet because we do.

do not Assent and Subscribe to the new Articles of Faith that *Rome* hath invented for us, we cease to be a Christian Church, are markt for Hereticks, which are worse than Pagans with them, and must be certainly damn'd. Nay, should we embrace all the other Doctrines of *Rome*, and deny only the Popes Authority and Supremacy, (that Epitome of their Christianity) it would avail us little, we are Heathens still. Should we reject but one Article of Pope *Pius's* Creed, suppose the Doctrine of Purgatory or Merit, yet because this questions Infallibility, the centre of all their Religion, we are in the state of Damnation still: Should we receive their Doctrines as probable and in a larger and more favourable meaning, yet because we do not entertain them as Articles of Faith in the sense of the Church, our case is not mended, we shall meet with Fires here and hereafter for our reward. Should we wink and swallow them all down with a good Catholick stomach, yet if the Bishop of *Rome* should give out a new Edition of Faith, enlarged with many more monstrous Doctrines and Opinions, yet if we boggle and keck at them, all our former Righteousness shall not be remembered, we are Apostates worse than *Turks* and *Infidels*; and who can tell what this Infallible and powerful Guide of Christendom will do? For when things obscure, or of an indifferent Nature; when things wherein they differ among themselves, and onely serve a temporal Interest, when Opinions which they can dispense withal upon occasion, when onely the modes and manner of Truth, when Contradictories, and Doctrines directly leading unto impiety, and things Barbarous and Blaspheinous have been christened Articles of Faith and Fundamentals of Religion, have we not just reason to suspect as ill or worse may be done again? And the intrigues of *Trent* may be acted once more, and as many

many new Articles of Faith as Titular Bishops, by the same Spirit moving in the same manner; were not the first and early Christians sound Members of Christs Body though they never thought of such wild Opinions as these, and publisht truths directly contrary to them? And could I suppose them to have known these Innovations, out of Zeal and Fidelity to their trust, would have detested and abhor'd them. Was Christ negligent in the discharge of his mighty Office, and his Apostles defective in their Duties and Ministry, not to acquaint the first Christians with these great truths, and were they reveal'd in the *Tridentine* Council onely to us upon whom the ends of the world are come. These Primitive Disciples of Christ thought *themselves secure of Heaven by this short Creed, that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God.* And the contrary was the character of the Man of Sin, that denied that *Jesus was come in the Flesh*, that he was the God incarnate and the true *Messiah*, and were scandalized at his meanness and obscurity. *St. Paul* told the *Taylor*, that certainly he would be saved if he believed that *Jesus was the Christ*, all other Fundamentals of Christianity one way or other being necessarily included in that belief: And thought that he made *sincere and sound Disciples*, if they believed what he preach'd, *onely Jesus and the Resurrection*, in their full compass and latitude. Though we believe all this in a more expresse and explicityence, all that is contain'd in Scripture, in the Apostles Creed, or the two other Creeds drawn up by the Church to explain the Christian Religion in some Articles, and to oppose the Doctrines of Hereticks, yet the first Christians shall be saved and we shall be damned; they shall be the Elect and the Church of God, we must be Reprobates and the Synagogue of Satan. Or let *Rome* shew her wonted Charity, and say she doubts also of their Salvation. Or did Christ connive at that

time of Ignorance, or had he as a Lawgiver forgot to declare some part of the Will and Pleasure of God, and upon better remembrance after so many hundred years, suggested it to his careful Vicar? Or did Christ, knowing their Nature and Circumstances of it, that they could not bear them at that time, therefore delay the discovery so long? Or did these new Articles lie hid so long conceal'd by his Apostles, or buried by some lewd Hereticks in the rubbish of those Churches they pull'd down, but afterwards found, (as they say the Cross was) and now restored to light? Or are these new Articles some way or other contained in the ancient Creeds which we believe, and by easie and natural consequences deduc'd from them. Some such fine reasons as these must be pretended, otherwise we can safely conclude that our Church is truly ancient and Apostolical, though she disowns the late inventions of the *Romish* Bishop and is known to be the Spouse of Christ by her first features and complexion, though she hath cast off the new *Italian* dress. For, was the Christian Church the House of God, irregular in its building, wanting of Beams and Pillars, the Essentials of Religion, till *Rome's* curious and careful Builder cast it into a new Model and compleated it?

2. This Question supposeth that the Christian Church ought always to be visible, which is not so strictly true. For Visible or Invisible make not two Churches, but different States, Conditions or Respects of one and the same. 'Twas designed by Christ, that all that are Baptiz'd into the Communion of his Faith, and Church, should make an Outward and Visible Profession of it, by their Religious Assemblies and Worship, by their Sacraments, Discipline, and Government, whereby being United among themselves, and to Christ their Head, they should constitute one Body call'd the Catholick-church,

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in whose Communion they must live and dye. But so it came to pass, that the number of Christian People so professing and owning the Faith of Jesus, was lesser or greater, more conspicuous or obscure, as Persecutions or Heresies grew and prevailed among them, which like raging Plagues wasted whole Countries, destroying some, perverting others, and making many fly into remoter Kingdoms, and onely some scattered and solitary Christians living in Caves and Wilderneses remained behind, or onely the face of a distressed Christian Church, as it hapned to the Seven *Asian* and the *African* Churches, which now labour under a Mahometan Pride and Superstition : But as it lost in one Country it gained in another, the *Jewish* Persecution and others driving several Colonies of Christians into remoter Countries, where they spread and enlarged their Religion, and many times the distress or triumph of the Church follow'd the changes and revolutions in the Civil State, suffering or flourishing with it. And often the abuse of Religion, Prostituting of it to Hypocrisie and secular ends, the wicked lives of its Disciples, or want of Courage or Resolution in its defence, hath tempted Providence to permit pestilent Heresies (worse than that in these Northern parts) to prevail, and Paganism to return again. But still the promise of Christ to his Church was *firm, and the Gates of Hell did not prevail against her*. And though she was forc'd sometimes to travel from Country to Country, and lookt small and obscure in the number of her Followers, yet still some or other parts and corners of the world, and true and zealous Christians in them made up the little flock, and shall never fail while the world endures. Popery like the *Egyptian* darkness had overspread this and other Nations, yet here and there was as *Israelite* that had light in his dwellings, and a counter-charm against

the Enchantments of *Egypt*, the Gospel, that at length did prevail against corruptions, and made its Followers visible and numerous. They ask us, Where was our Religion before *Luther*? As though it was not, because it did not visibly appear; or no where in the World, because not here in *England*, or in other parts where Popery did domineer, and the *Romish Faction was all and whole* Christianity in the World, the *Catholick Church*, which implies contradiction and absurdity. Christianity here indeed was obscur'd, and like the Sun under the Cloud; but still the Sun was the same, and at length conquer'd the Mists: 'tis a fine Question to ask, Where was the Sun before Noon day? We will suppose her Followers to be few, yet Christ is true, though others are Lyars; for he never promised that the Members of the true Catholick Church should be always famous for their numbers, or that multitudes should always follow Truth, nor ever directed men to follow the Multitude in search of Truth, which is found otherways, not by Votes and Polling for her. Did not our Saviour ask the question, when he should come again, whether at the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, or at the Judgement day, *whereof the other was a Type and Prefiguration, whether he should find Faith on Earth or no*: Did not the Prophet sadly complain in the Reigns of *Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah, that the good man is perished out of the Land, and there is none righteous among men; they could not then reckon up of the Tribe of Judah Twelve thousand, and yet there was true Faith, and a Church of God, though little and obscure. Dost not King David cry out, Help Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men*, corruption in Faith and Manners usually going together. And *Elijah tells a sad story of the Children of Israel, that they had broken their Covenant and destroy'd the Altars and the Prophets,*

Luke 18 8.

Micha. 7. 2.

Psal. 12. 1.

1. King. 19. 10.

Prophets, and he only was left alive, that they sought his life also, God tells him that yet for all that he had seven Verf. 18.
thousand knees that had not bowed to Baal ; still there was a
small Church not infected with Idolatry, though obscure
*and unknown to *Elijah*. Have not some of the *Romish**
Writers told us, that at Christs Passion the Church was
*onely left in the Virgin *Mary*, all then forsaking Christ*
but the holy Mother. The Shepherd was smitten and
the Sheep disperst. And they further confess , that
in the times of Antichrist there shall be neither Pope,
Monk, nor Maf, (if this be all, that Monster is not so
terrible as he is Painted) and their Annalists complain
of such sad things as these in the tenth Century. And Vev. 12. 6.
certainly they have read of the Woman in the Wildernefs, 11. 7.
and the Witnesses slain, and of Hay and Stubble covering the 1 Cor. 3. 12.
Foundation, which describe the deplorable condition of
the Christian Church, and Fopperies, Niceties, and In-
ventions of men obscuring the Essentials of the Christi-
an Faith. Should a Revolt happen (which God di-
*vert) from the Reformed Church of *England* to *Roma-**
nism again, might not others ask them the same Quest-
ion, Where was your Religion before Eighty three, or
Eighty four, before such a time? Would they not an-
*swer at *Rome* and in *England* also, onely kept under and*
obscur'd by Hereticks and Tyrannical Princes. Ours was
also here lockt up in Bibles, own'd by some numbers, de-
sir'd by more, onely frighted from a visible profession
of it, by the Torments that did attend it. And Chri-
stianity though not so visible , yet was purer when it,
and its professors dwelt in Rocks and Mountains and
Dens, places of privacy and obscurity, in the Reigns of
**Nero* and *Dioclesian* , than when some Kings were its*
Nursing Fathers, and Queens its Nursing Mothers,
and took possession of the Seven Hills. And there
was a true Church of God though overlay'd and groan-
ing

Cypr. Epist.
P. 59.
Ox. Edit.
*aspice totum
orbem pene va-
statum, &c.*

ing under Arrianism as before Persecution, and in *Cyprians* time, as ours once under the Popish Yoke. And the truth of Christianity, like the truth and essence of other things, depends not upon splendid entertainment or judgment of others, nor the Church upon the Visible number of its Members, but it may be a true Church whether visible or hid, which this Question denies.

3. This Question supposeth that the *Roman* Church cannot err, but that it remained pure and undefiled, as it came from the hands of Christ, through the many Centuries of years, till it came to the times of *Luther*, and from thence shall so continue till the Worlds end, and therefore we made a false charge against them of corruptions in their Religion, to excuse our Innovation. But we have reason to conclude She hath foully err'd from the Faith, and that more fatally and obstinately, because She pretends She cannot err. For upon what grounds doth She found Her Infallibility? Upon the Scriptures? They are onely so many dead Letters, till the breadth of the Church doth give them life, and they are then to do the Church a good turn, and give her Infallibility, which is such a Circle, as makes mens Brains so giddy turning round in it, that they scarce know what the Scriptures, and what the Church do mean; the places of Scripture to prove Infallibility are such, which have onely reference to the Apostles themselves, their Doctrines or Confessions of Faith, as Divine and Infallible, but not to their pretended Successors. Or else they are restrained, not simply unto all truth, but onely unto all truth that is necessary to Salvation, in which the Pope or a Council cannot err, while they follow the Spirit of Truth in the Scriptures, and not compel the Spirit and Scriptures to follow them. For they do not irresistibly force the minds of Christians into truth :

Mat. 16. 18.
Joh. 16. 13.
Mat. 28. 20.

truth : Or else relate onely to the Catholick Church, Mat 18. 20. and not to the particular *Roman*, or else are applicable to private Assemblies and their Worship of God, which no body but Quakers and Enthusiasts think to be Infallible. And all the first Ages of Christianity and undoubted Tradition never in the least imagined such an Infallibility as now the Church of *Rome* dreams of. They are at War among themselves where this Infallibility is lodg'd, either in the Pope alone, or in a General Council alone, or in both together, the Pope sitting in person there, or by his Legates, or in the Council confirmed by the Pope; till they agree among themselves and prove it better, we say 'tis no where plac'd but in the Scriptures, and they do not prove any other person or persons upon Earth to be infallible in their determinations. To say such an infallible Judge of Controversies to guide the Church, is absolutely necessary, and therefore Divine Providence hath plac'd him some where or other, and who but the Pope can be the man? is onely to prescribe methods unto God, and teach him how to govern his Church, and not be thankful for the good old ways of Salvation and Peace (Scriptures, an honest Judgement with divine assistance and humane means) he hath chalkt out for us, but contrive some new ones of their own. Such Infallibility must be of no use to the Church of God, for upon the *Romish* principles, it cannot be known, for the Pope before he be Infallible must be Bishop of *Rome*, but the Sacrament of Order, according to the Council of *Trent*, receives its validity from the intention of the Priest, that when he ordained him Bishop, he did what the Church intended, and who can tell upon these grounds, what this supposed Priest was, who gave this Order, or dive into his thoughts and intentions, which their Casuists confess may sometimes be very perverse.

But

Archbishop
Land against
Fisher, 272.

But if there be this Infallibility at *Rome*, why do not the Countries and Religious Orders in them still under their Dominion receive the blessed Fruits of it, and still all the brawls and squables among themselves, if his Holiness be at leisure, and it be worth his while: And why should not the Champions of *Rome* bend all their Power to prove this main point of Infallibility, when all other controversies would fall under and submit unto its Power, a compendious way to make the Christian world at Peace and Unity with its self. But why need we labour to disprove the Popes Infallibility, when themselves put their shoulders to it, and do the work for us, in disputing among themselves, whether the Pope being an Heretick may be deposed, by which Question they confess that he may fall into heresie, which is error of the highest nature, carrying wilfulness and obstinacy with it. And accordingly these Infallible men have been guilty of Heresies, as Pope *Honorius* of Monothelitism, and *Liberius* of Arrianism and the like, and many of them liv'd most debauched lives, as fatal to Christianity as Heresie, and Fallibility, and wherein Providence is highly concern'd. This Doctrine of Infallibility looks like a plain contrivance of the *Romish* Church, having some way or other slippt into these gross errors from small beginnings, and finding them not defensible by all the sleights and arts of their cunning heads, are forc'd to quit their hold and betake themselves to their common Sanctuary of Infallibility, that let these things be what they will in dispute between us and them, they are sure they are great Truths by vertue of Infallibility, which is one of the Miracles of *Rome*, which can change the nature of things, which may be true in *England*, and the quite contrary at *Rome*, as Father *Cotton* and other Jesuites affirm'd at *Paris*. For it's plain to all impartial judgements, that their Doctrine of Purgatory, Transubstantiation, and the like,

Fowles Hist.
Preface p. I.

like, are not to be found in Scriptures, are utter unknown to the truly ancient Fathers and the eldest and purest times of Christianity, and contrary to the reason of Mankind. They may as well tell us that the City of *Rome* was never sackt and spoil'd because some Flatterers humour'd her Pride and arrogance calling her the immortal City and impregnable Rock, as that these gross errors never invaded and ruin'd the Christian Faith, because of the fine name of Infallibility, which they arrogate to themselves. And may as well put out our eyes, and then bid us see if we can discover any errors in the *Romish* Church. And *St. Peter's* being at *Rome* proves no more that he left Infallibility behind him, than consecrated Clouts sent from *Rome* that the Infant that wears them shall ever after be a firm defender of the *Romish* Faith.

4. This Question will serve any Heresies or errors that have got some Antiquity on their side against a Reformation. If it be true in this case, 'tis so in all others, and then what a shelter have they provided for all Heresies, if they chance to live long, to be safe and secure in, and escape correction. And there are many errors contemporary with Christianity it self in its first plantation in the World, at least followed it very close at the heels, such were the ancient Gnosticks, the Carpocratians or Ebionites, the spawn of *Magus* and others, who can plead great Antiquity on their side, and as properly ask any Reformer of their Heresies, Where was his Religion before such a time, as the inconstant World began to favour his new Faith and Innovation. And so Errors once superinduc'd upon the Truth, will become by age Truth it self, and are never to be mended for fear of this pert Question, and charge of Innovation. And it's plain, that new and old are but uncertain Characters to judge of Truth and Falshood by, there being sometimes a new Truth that is lately dis-

*Urbs eterna
& immobile
saxum Grot in
Apo. c. 17.*

cover'd to be so, but really old, and an old error kept up a long time by force or art, and walking in the garb of Truth, but truly new, having come in after the Truth it vies with: Time like a River many times bringing down Straw and Trash, and leaving weightier things behind, which when they come to be retriev'd are call'd new Fashions and Inventions. When *Abraham* restored the true Worship of God, and stript it of Idolatry and Superstition, the *Chaldean* Priests, whose Power and Interest was shaken by it, were *very brisk and ready* to charge this Pious and mighty man from the East with Novelty and Singularity in his Religion, the false service of God in these Countries being then ancient and almost universal, though the *Patriarchs* Religion did derive it self from a very ancient stock, that of *Adams* in Paradise, kept up by an *Enoch* and a *Noah* in single Families, when *all Flesh had corrupted their ways*, and now deliver'd unto *Abraham*, and now all the sticklers for a false Religion began to upbraid the Sons and Followers of *Abraham's* Faith with Novelty, and ask them, where was your Religion before the times of *Abraham*, who set up his but yesterday, and scorns and uncharitably damns all his Forefathers, who of old liv'd beyond the River in our Religion. The same Objection might have been cast in the teeth of *Moses*, when he was settling a Religion deliver'd to him by God, in opposition to the Idolatries and false Devotions of the World, and to serve his further designs of providence, that he affected Novelty and Singularity; that all the world stood against him in this, and one of his *Disciples afterwards was Inhumane and uncharitable in praying God to pour out his Indignation upon the Heathen who had not known his Laws*. And his Successor *Joshua* might have met with the same fare, when he bids his people chuse whom they will serve, either the

Gods

Isai. 41. 2.

Gen. 6. 11.

Psal. 79. 6.

Josh. 24. 15.

Gods beyond the Floud, and in *Egypt*., or the Gods of the *Amorites*, Old and great Nations, who might have had this Objection in its full strength on their side, or the God of *Abraham*, and stoutly tells them, Let that plausible Argument weigh with them what it will, as for my self and his Family they would serve the Lord. And as this Religion might degenerate in descending Ages, so any Restorer of it might be set upon by the same frivolous Objection, and so it happened to our *Messias* (and his fore-runner who was to restore all things) who when he began to reform the false glosses, and corrupt senses, which the Scribes and Pharisees had put upon the Law of *Moses*, and cry down their Traditions which made the Commands of God of none effect, was lookt upon as an Enemy to *Moses*, a Blasphemer of the Law, a Prophaner of the Temple, and a Changer of all their Religion, whose Design was onely to fill up their Law, and restore it to its Natural Beauty and Perfection, and *before Abraham was, I am*, not only in his Divine Nature, and designation to his Office, but in his Religion also, which now he was going to Heb. 9. 10. teach the Jew and Gentile too. And now the times of a general Reformation being come, and the Apostles were Preaching this excellent Religion unto all the World, *Jew and Gentile conspire together in the same Language*, Acts 24. 14. and call them setters forth of strange Gods and new Heresies, Heads and Contrivers of new Sects, and Ways, and are whipt for Vagrants and Impostors, who would cheat the World out of their old paternal Religions, that were entail'd upon them, teach them to speak ill of the Gods of their Fathers, and Predecessors, and to think they all dyed in a false Religion, and to embrace a new-fangled Faith of a few illiterate and rambling fellows who had turn'd the World upside down. And had this Argument prevail'd then, as much as the *Romanists* do
 * D 2 desire,

desire it should now, we should have had no Christianity among us, the Idol-Gods of our Ancestors in this Island, their Woodens and Twisters would have prescribed against Christ himself.

3. To turn the Question upon them, and ask them some others of the like nature. Men that are insolent, and ever boasting of the Antiquity of their Family, and upbraiding others with their obscure Birth and Extraction, do many times meet with some cross Questions about the Head and Fountain of their Families, which many times proves onely to be a Shepherd, or meaner Original, made glorious with arrogant Titles and borrow'd Names. Search into the Pedigree of *Romes* Religion, we do not find Christ, or *St. Peter*, or any of his Apostles to be the Authors of it; but Pride, Interest, and Design, old Vices indeed, but new Fathers of a Christian Church, which brought in a late and new generation of Opinions, and additions to Christs Religion, clothing them with the venerable Names of *Primitive* and *Apostolical*. Where was the *Romish* Religion before the *Council* of *Trent* concluded onely about the year 1563. of a later date than when *Luther* first began, which legitimated all their Innovations, the Issue of Scholastick Wranglings, pretended Dreams, and Visions, forc'd and unnatural. Sences of Scripture, Ambition and Profit, the Exchequer of *Rome*, to be made Sons of the Church and Fundamentals of the Christian Faith. Many of their own Writers confess, that for 1400 or 1500 years the Pope was not believ'd to be Infallible, till of late some of their flaming Zealots have invested him with Infallibility, whereby the *Roman* Church is sick unto death, and no cure is to be apply'd, because she is so certain and sure that she is well. Their lewd Doctrine of Transubstantiation, was not made an Article of Faith, till the Council of

Late-

Lateran under *Innocent* the Third, above 1200 years after Christ, and many of their own *Writers* are still dissatisfied about it. The Title of *Universal Bishop* was obtained by Pope *Boniface* the Third, not till about 600 years after Christ, fearing a powerful Rival the *Constantinopolitan* Bishop, who affected the same, and therefore by the Popes themselves was declaim'd against as proud and Antichristian, but now by Hypocrisy and base compliance with the wicked *Phocas*, who was guilty of Treason and Murder against the Emperour *Mauritius*, *Rome* gained the delicious point, and has made it a fundamental Article of her new Religion, though the Popes came not up to their swaggering temper and Power of Hectoring Christian Princes some hundreds of years afterwards. The Doctrine of Purgatory, which some derive from the Platonick Fancies of *Origen*, the Montanism of *Tertullian*, pretended Visions, and Pagan Stories, Rhetorical Flourishes, and doubtful Expressions of the later Fathers, yet it was not positively affirmed till about the year 1140, and not made an Article of Faith till the Council of *Trent*, then indeed a good Estate became a surer way to Heaven than a good Life and Conversation. The use of Indulgences was the Moral to the Fable of Purgatory, and began to grow much what about the same time, though it came not to the height and perfection till Pope *Leo* the Tenth's time, when *Luther* so stoutly opposed them, then Heaven was set to sale, and the best Chapman was the greatest Saint, though they boast of the second Council of *Nice* for the antiquity of their Image-worship. (And if it will do them any good, so they may of *Simon Magus*, who was of an elder date, and a very fit Patron of such an Opinion) yet the Council of *Frankfurt* condemn'd it, and the purest times did not so much as allow the making of Images. And it was not the Catholick Doctrine in *France*
for

for almost 900 years after Christ, nor in *Germany* till after the 12th Century, then indeed such a Doctrine might be very proper, when true Religion was turn'd into Pageantry and a form of Godliness. The number of the seven Sacraments is now an Article of the *Romish* Faith, yet the Council of *Florence* ended in the year 1439, was the first Council, and *Peter Lombard* the first man that precisely fixt that number. That the Laity ought to receive the Sacrament of the Lords Supper onely in one kind was never made an Article of Faith till the Council of *Constance* concluded in the year 1418, then indeed that Council with the greatest insolence, and a direct Invasion of the Authority of Christ, took the Cup from the Laymens mouths, notwithstanding (as 'twas then acknowledged) the Institution of Christ to the contrary, and they may as well Christen the Laicks Children onely in the name of the Holy Ghost, leaving out the Father and the Son by the way of concomitancy, it being as Lawful to Baptize as Communicate by the halves: For what cannot such a pretended Power do?

The prohibiting of Priests to *Marry* was not in perfection, as 'tis now, till Pope *Gregory* the Sevenths time. Let them tell us where 'tis said by Christ, or his Apostles, or any of the truly Ancient Writers of the Christian Church, that Pennance is a Sacrament, or that Auricular Confession is necessary to Salvation, or that Prayers ought to be made in an unknown Tongue, or that good works are strictly meritorious, or where can they find the many Impieties and absurdities of their Mass in those early times of Antiquity. And since they are fond of asking us this Question, we might ask them many more, about the many Fopperies and Innovations in their Faith and Devotion, and many they are, and large is the inventory, almost as many as are the Christian Truths in direct opposition to them, or prevarication from them:

But

But they seem to confess the newness of their Religion, when they arrogantly set up a Power in their Church, to frame new Articles of Faith, and many things, onely Opinions and Notions at first, have grown up by degrees to Fundamental Truths, and having once slipped into error, they are bound to maintain it, for the Reputation and Authority of Holy Church. And who knows how many of this Nature are upon the *Romish* forge, ready to be put into their Creed, and where must we end; not till it be believed, that consecrated Feathers and Holy Water, can convey Divine Grace to us, and drive away wicked Spirits, and the Weathercocks of our Churches be thought Pillars of it. Would the Champions of *Rome* speak out, they would tell us, as their *Eckius* did the *Duke of Bavaria*, That the Doctrine of *Luther* might be overthrown by the Fathers, though not by the Scriptures; 'tis a plain confession that we have the truest Antiquity on our side, and in the beginning it was not so. But we add, that we have the *Fathers also on our side*, for otherwise what mean their *Expurgatorian Indices* of the Fathers, and other Ancient Writers, but that they very well know, that these are old Enemies to Pope *Pius's* new Creed, and the Truth in them confounds their error. Such an account as this, about the Original and Progress of their new Additions to the old Faith was convenient to be given, not because the Nature of the thing did necessarily require it, for it had been sufficient onely to have prov'd, that these *Romish* Additions to the Christian Faith, are contrary to the Word of God, and no where to be found in any of the Divine Writings, the onely Infallible Rule of Faith, and that they have no power of minting new Articles Fundamental to Salvation; but because the Disciples of *Rome* so frequently ask us the Question, and lay so much stress upon it, if these are Innovations crept into their Church,

Church, who was the first Author of them? when did he begin? in whose Reign and in what place did he live? who did oppose him? what company believ'd on him? and what his new Opinions were as they instance in Arrianism and other Heresies? And because they fancy we cannot make all these particulars so absolutely plain, therefore they say we have falsely charged the *Romish* Church with new Errours, and that their Faith is truly ancient and by an uninterrupted Succession of Infalible Bishops hath been convey'd down from Christ and his Apostles in its full purity to this present Age. To satisfy their curiosity, the defenders of the Reformation have done this; but suppose they could not have been so particular about the birth of these new Errours, or had made some mistakes in the compass of time, yet however the charge of Innovation against the *Romish* Church stands firm and good upon these accounts.

I. That Reformation carries not so much a respect to the Error, when it began, as to the Error it self. Not whether it be sooner or later, but whether it be an error contrary to the true Christian Faith. It may serve some honest purposes to know the who, and the when, the where and the how, and other circumstances of its beginning, and proceeding; but the necessity of Reformation springs from the nature of the Error, which came from the invention of men, and not the Authority of Christ. And matters not much, whether *Simon Magus*, who was contemporary with the Apostles, was the first Author of it, or Pope *Hildebrand* at so great a distance. 'Tis enough, that we are certain and sure, that the Popish Doctrines which we condemn, by comparing them with the Scriptures, are not Christs and his Apostles, have none of their Images or Supercriptions upon them, who only had full Authority to make them current, and true Articles of Faith. They have indeed

deed Christianity among them, but like *Joseph's Coat*, to dip in bloud, so over-lac'd with Fopperies and undecent Ceremonies, and so many new pieces stitch'd to the old Cloth, that the old Fathers, if alive, would scarce know it to be the true *Joseph's*, and would not trouble themselves so much, to ask the time when this came to pass, as lament the sadness of the change. And the Apostles did not take so much care to tell the punctual time to the Disciples when Antichrist should discover himself, as to make them stand upon their guard to defend that Faith which he would invade, [where and] whensoever he should come, or whosoever he was.

2. The difficulty of knowing the precise and punctual times when Errors first began. In many sorts of Changes or Innovations, 'tis hard to know the nice time of their beginning, but some latitude of Judging is allow'd; and why not in things especially relating to Religion. Are there not wild Opinions left upon Record among the Pagan Writers, whose *Authors* are either unknown, or which are falsely father'd upon others, and as hard to be known as the head of *Nile*. Can the nicest *Romanist* tell us what *Rabbi*; and in what place and age first superinduc'd the several false Glosses and Senses to the Law of *Moses*, yet our Saviour (though he knew them well) thought it sufficient to tell them, that in the beginning it was not so; and by comparing the *Mosaic* Religion, it plainly appears they were new additions to the good old way. And how many Errors sprung up in the times of Christianity, of whose Original and other Circumstances both the *Romanists* and our selves are yet uncertain. And how many things of this nature more near our own times are we puzzled about, and the difficulty of knowing them ariseth principally from this twofold account.

1. From the subtilty of the contrivers of Errors: Which many times are the cunning and the wise in their Generation, which the necessity of their Cause requires; Truth being strong, and Error naturally weak, and that sly deceiving Spirit lends it his utmost assistance to serve the design. Such men know how to disguise new Fallhoods in the old habits of Truth, to make them look ancient and venerable; they feel and know the temper of the age, and fit their Opinions to the interest and pleasure of it. They prepare their errors to be received by degrees, and one part must draw on the other, and the whole must be insensibly swallowed down. So it hapned in the adoration and invocation of Saints and Images, and the whole structure of the

Romish Religion, which by several steps and in many ages advanced to its mighty bulk. The cunning knew the consequences of their own positions, how far they would reach, which the vulgar eye discern'd not; they well foresaw how their Hey and Stubble, variety of Phrases, and changes of Syllables, would at length fire the Foundation of Religion, yet being invented at first by the angelical Doctors and leaders of an age, for same and reputation sake, they & their followers first defended them for bare Truths, afterwards for Sacred and Fundamental ones; and things at first only piously believed, soon after have been adopted into a Creed: and men of Rascals and Superstition only great in Place & office, have vented opinions whose fatal conclusions they at first, we hope, did not know, yet the Cunning many times have hatcht what they left, and improv'd it fatally to Religion; the greatness of the man, whether an *Innocent* or an *Hildebrand* gave the error its first reputation, and the cunning of others its strength and argument. Many of the great and knowing heads of the World being corrupted unto the *Roman* side, to defend those errors which had got footing in the Church. But how can we unlock the secret methods of *Rome*, or describe the ways and policies by which the mystery of Iniquity works? Yet we are sure it's carri'd on, by the windings and turnings of the Serpent, and men that he employs upon design to ruine truth; for when the Apostle describes the sad Apostacies and defections from the Faith, *they are said to be wrought by men of Skill and Art, who lie in wait to deceive.*

Eph. 4. 14.

2. From the Passions and Infirmities of other men. These give the false and busie deceiver an easie Victory. When Opinions are so contriv'd as to serve the designs of Pride and Covetousness, Ambition and Lust, and other Vices they easily pass for mighty Truths, their Original is not enquir'd into, the Judgment is brib'd, and they bear the title of ancient and Primitive, or what the deceiver pleaseth: For these Passions have effeminatized the mind, made it soft and sluggish, and any bold error shall slip down, rather than be at the charge of a further search and enquiry to know whether these things be so or no. The *Roman* Religion being so well cut out in its different Doctrines, to hit mens Vices and Passions, Gaiety or Melancholy, Enthusiasm or Fury, Power or Design, it's no wonder, it did prevail in a sly and silent manner, interest having put out their eyes, this Kingdom came not with observation, and the approaches of the Enemy in the night of Ignorance, viz. the darkness that could be felt of the ninth, tenth, and

and eleventh Century, when all good Learning and Manners too were fast asleep, the time when many of the new devices of *Rome* were hammering out, and the noise not heard, were not discover'd, till they had taken possession, and then by vertue of Power and great Names defended their Title. And their own Writers confess, that many of the great Guardians of Faith, the Popes of *Rome*, were very Vicious and Illiterate persons, whose Vice and Ignorance kept them nodding, while the little Thieves, the Notions, and Speculations of men of Wit and Interest set open the Churches doors for the greater Errours to come crowding in. Our Saviour confirms the truth of this when he compares his Church to a Field which had been sown by him, and his Apostles, with very good seed, Wheat or some other Grain; but while men slept, when Christians were grown wicked and careless, ignorant or factious, comes the Enemy and scatters the Tares, and a new harvest of Weeds, Heretical Doctrines, Superstitious Practices, Foppish and Phantastick Rites over-ran and choakt the purer Grain. And the Apostle tells his Disciples, *that men of dangerous principles abusing the grace of God, speaking evil of Dignities and despising Dominions, and denying Christ that bought them, had crept in unawares, being well disguiz'd with fine Names and pretences, while good men were careless and sleepy.* And when most begin to broach new Errours, and spread their inventions for mighty Truths, they do it with all the skill and artifice that so bad a design can possibly require. Errour and Innovation necessarily calling for the utmost cunning and slyness to its aid and assistance. Religion therefore may easily suffer a considerable change, yet good men know not how, neither the time nor authors of it. Mat 13. 24, 25.

It being therefore only absolutely necessary for us to know that whensoever and howsoever these errours in the Church first sprung up, that they were contrary to the Primitive Faith of Christ and his Apostles, and therefore were to be amended and weeded up notwithstanding the common question, where was our harvest of Wheat before the Weeders our Reformers came? for the Church of *England* finding old Christianity strangely over-grown with the new Doctrines and Creeds of *Rome*, contrary to the Offices of Christ, the design of his undertaking for Mankind, and the true spirit of his Religion, it became a duty, as much as they lov'd their Souls, and would be true and loyal unto Christ, to shake off these new and sinful Impositions, and restore true and primitive Christianity. Had our differences with *Rome* consisted onely in things less fit and proper, used by them in their religious Offices,

or in Rituals or Gestures not so decent, they might have had some Pretence to roar against us, for breaking off Communion with her; but when they plow up the very Foundation, as one of her Pagan Captains did the Walls of *Jerusalem's* Temple, and lay all waste before them, their new additions eating out the very Heart of old Religion, to thunder out Damnation against us, because we renounce her Communion in this, is to add uncharitableness and other gross Vices to their former sin, as though they could not preserve Christianity, but by defacing of it more. Our Prince being constituted by God a nursing Father of the Church, and our Bishops in their Episcopal power being co-ordinate with him of *Rome*, or any other in the Christian world, ought under the penalty of Damnation, and did accordingly, reform the *Romish* corruptions, which had tainted the Vitals of Christianity; an indispensable duty it was to preserve the Primitive Faith, like a chaste Virgin, and not suffer it to be longer prostituted to the Designs and Passions of men by a solemn Vow, and our Souls were at stake, we had engag'd to preserve it pure and undefiled, and therefore with all just and proper ways and methods we are bound earnestly to contend for it. In duty therefore to our Lord and Masters Command, at such a time we began our Reformation, but wish that it had been promoted and compleated many years before, though the same Question would have been as fitly asked then, or any other time, except they think that errours must be immortal, and the gates of Heaven shall not prevail against them. The goodness and wisdom of our Reformation, would be readily acknowledg'd and imitated, did not Fame and Ambition, Power and Secular Interest, infect the Eye, and change the natural shape and colour of things; and 'tis a sign the cause of *Rome* wants strength, when such a trifling, only popular, Objection against our Reformation is made so powerful to preserve their Disciples in their Communion, and amuse our own. And we need say no more against it but this, and 'tis no *Roman* uncharitableness and rigor. That if *Rome*, notwithstanding all the clear evidence against her new and upstart Opinions, shall obstinately defend them, and condemn a wise and pious Reformation, let her suffer the just punishment of her wilful errours. He that will prefer an old Disease before a new Cure, let him be for ever sick. For we have healed *Babylon*, and she was not healed.